

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 8, 2017

Dr. Robert Avossa
Superintendent
School District of Palm Beach County
Fulton-Holland Educational Services Center
3300 Forest Hill Boulevard
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Robert W. Runcie
Superintendent
Broward County Public Schools
600 SE Third Ave
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301

Dear Superintendent Avossa and Superintendent Runcie:

We commend you for your commitment to the education of K-12 students in our communities. We know you have worked very hard to provide nurturing and safe spaces to learn which is critical for early education. With this in mind, we write to urge you to incorporate human trafficking education into the curriculums of the Palm Beach County and Broward County Public Schools systems. Given the serious nature of trafficking in persons (TIP), we believe that more must be done to educate students, families, and faculty of the dangers and signs of trafficking, and the resources available for combatting this modern-day form of slavery.

As you know, traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to control victims and subject them to compelled labor or commercial sex acts. According to Polaris, an organization active in the global fight to eradicate modern slavery, there are 20.9 million victims of TIP world-wide. The International Labour Organization, another organization active in the fight against TIP, estimates that more than 5.5 million of these victims are children. Within the United States, Florida has the third highest rate of TIP, and Broward and Palm Beach Counties respectively rank 1st and 4th for in-state TIP incidences.

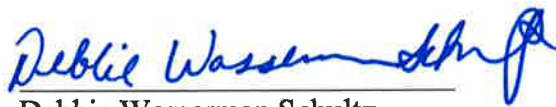
Many child victims of TIP are students in the public schools systems. A 2015 Department of Justice funded study of domestic sex trafficking of minors reported a median age of entry into prostitution of 15. School administrators and staff need to be aware that these reprehensible crimes are taking place right in our community, and that no school is immune from traffickers. Educators and school personnel are well positioned to help identify and report suspected abuse and instances of trafficking. With appropriate training in the risk-factors, warning signs, recruitment, and methods for identifying trafficking, school faculty can save lives by recognizing the signs and intervening to connect students to services.

As we are sure you will agree, it is of the utmost importance that we do more to prevent trafficking in our communities. We ask that you join us in moving the discussion forward on how we can best address this alarming issue.


Sincerely,


Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

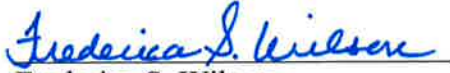

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress